Hawaiians just say no

Committee turns down potential $291-million profit

BY PETER BLAIS

The Honolulu City Council Human Services Committee has voted against the city's proposed sale of West Loch Golf Course to a Japanese company, likely killing a deal that would have netted the city $291 million. Mayor Frank Fasi hoped to use for recreational facilities and three new public courses.

Jurigi Co. bid $111 million this spring for the new municipal course, which cost the city $20 million to build, and offered $200 million in impact fees if the city eventually approved two other golf course construction applications.

The committee voted 4-1 against Jurigi's offer. Committee Chairman Neal Abercrombie said his committee had two primary objections.

First, Abercrombie explained, the land was originally condemned for a municipal course and should be used for the new municipal course, which cost the city $20 million to build, and offered $200 million in impact fees if the city eventually approved two other golf course construction applications.

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Corps major holdup

BY MARK LESLIE

The Army Corps of Engineers has caused more delays in golf projects than any other organization, according to a survey of golf course architects.

Thirty-nine of 40 member firms answering an American Society of Golf Course Architects survey said they experienced difficulties in obtaining permits for courses because of environmental concerns by local, state or national agencies.

Fifty-six percent of the firms cited the primary obstacle as wetlands, which the Corps of Engineers over

Dry spell plagues Florida

BY PETER BLAIS

Late spring showers improved the situation somewhat. But Florida remained in the throes of a second straight early-season drought that left wells at record-low levels in some parts of the state and resulted in water restrictions that threatened many courses.

Because of weather patterns that generally move storms diagonally from northwest to southeast Florida, south-
Florida

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The water shortage is not confined to southwest Florida, according to Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association President Joel Jackson. The last normal, annual rainfall at Jackson’s Isleworth Golf & Country Club near Orlando was 52 inches in 1987. It dropped to 43 inches in 1988 and 26 inches in 1989. This year’s nine inches through the end of May is about the same as last year.

Isleworth falls within the South Florida Water Management District and hasn’t been restricted.

“But we were starting to experience some problems. We were having a problem doing what we needed to do with our monthly allotment,” said Jackson, who was grateful for the 1-1/2 inches of rain his course received June 2.

Most rain this time of year falls during brief but heavy thunderstorms, with much of the water escaping as runoff rather than being absorbed into the ground, Jackson said.

“It’s very localized. One course can be doing fine and another one a few miles away is hurting. Overall, central Florida is in reasonably good shape,” he added.

The water situation on the east coast has generally been better than on the western shore. But eastern courses are still feeling the effects of the drought.

“We got three inches this week (last week of May),” said Chuck Calhoun, superintendent of the North and South courses at John’s Island Club in Vero Beach. “That’s about as much as we had gotten all year. We’ve got 8.4 inches total so far this year. Normally we’d have between 12 and 16 inches by now.”

Calhoun said his courses are on voluntary restriction. The St. John’s Water Management District has requested courses water fairways just three times a week, greens and tees only at night. Still, the South course was down to a one-day supply of water prior to the late May rain.

“The fairways aren’t as good as we could have them. But the tees and greens are in good shape. Wetting agents have helped,” said Calhoun.

Ironically, John’s Island used to have its own effluent plant. But the city disassembled it and moved it to the mainland several years ago, said Calhoun. So, instead of the non-restricted source of water it had before, John’s Island now depends on a mainland well that can be restricted.

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